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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Fabián Alarcón Rivera, President of the Republic of Ecuador

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ecuador.

Mr. Fabián Alarcón Rivera, President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations, the President of the Republic of Ecuador, His Excellency Mr. Fabián Alarcón Rivera, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Alarcón Rivera (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am honoured to extend to you, Sir, on behalf of the Government and the people of Ecuador, warm congratulations on your election to preside over this session of the General Assembly. I am sure that your efforts will contribute to the advancement of the activities of our Organization. You may rely on the constant and resolute cooperation of Ecuador.

I should like to speak of several matters of interest to the international community that the United Nations has incorporated into its working agenda. My country follows with interest their development within the Organization and will act on the basis of the principles that guide Ecuador's foreign policy.

Ecuador believes that the search for general and complete global disarmament is a goal that our Organization should pursue indefatigably. This is not a utopian ideal but, rather, a constant objective that requires the active participation of all States within a global ethical context. True to this principle, my country is a party to all international and regional instruments related to disarmament.

The nations of the world have welcomed the end of the cold war and the attendant reduction of the risk of nuclear holocaust. Nevertheless, Ecuador views with apprehension the persistence of nuclear-weapon-development programmes and the continued existence of large atomic arsenals and the risks they pose for the peace and well-being of all. The international community cannot relax its guard and cease to insist on the elimination of such means of massive and indiscriminate destruction. This conviction has led Ecuador to lend its determined support to the global non-proliferation regimen and to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Thus, at the last session of the General Assembly, Ecuador was a sponsor of the resolution calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas.

Furthermore, Ecuador supports the work of the Conference on Disarmament in drawing up a draft text for a convention on the control of fissionable material, which is to be submitted to the General Assembly, and fully agrees with the working document submitted by

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members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries concerning the universal nature of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

With regard to weapons of mass destruction, disarmament has particular significance for the whole of the international community. However, we cannot overlook the fact that the subject of conventional disarmament is equally sensitive and that it is an issue that must attract the full and determined attention of the United Nations. For this reason, Ecuador welcomes the Disarmament Commission's decision to include in its agenda an item on guidelines for control, limitation and disarmament in connection with conventional weapons, with special attention to the consolidation of peace within the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N.

Ecuador also supports the convening in 1999 of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in accordance with the decision taken at the Assembly's last session. My country is especially interested in including in the agenda of that special session such relevant issues as the effective reduction of conventional forces and weapons, the relationship between disarmament and development, and confidence-building measures among States.

Because of their humanitarian cost, I must refer to a specific type of conventional weapon: anti-personnel landmines. Ecuador is a contracting party to several international agreements that ban and restrict the use of such weapons, and we urge all countries, whether signatories to those treaties or not, to observe them and scrupulously respect their terms.

My country is convinced that the community of States must persist in its efforts to reach agreement on the total prohibition of the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. Ecuador thus supports the Ottawa process, which is to conclude in December 1997 with the signing of a binding agreement on a total ban on anti-personnel landmines.

Humankind has painfully come to realize that international peace and security cannot be based on atomic equilibrium, arms races or mistrust and mutual suspicion. On the contrary, genuine peace must be based on respect for the rule of law, on the acceptance of the solidarity and interdependence of all States and on the common desire to move dynamically forward towards the solution of the critical problems of dire poverty, disease, unemployment, illiteracy and economic and social inequality among peoples and nations. In order to make progress, we must recognize and live by universal ethical principles and seek peaceful solutions to our multilateral and bilateral problems through peaceful processes, through dialogue and reconciliation.

The countries of Latin America, and Ecuador in particular, are concerned by the fact that economic development is not accompanied by social development. It is ironic that in an ever wealthier world, development-cooperation resources have fallen 20 per cent in real terms in recent years. How, then, can the international community fulfil the commitments entered into at the World Summit for Social Development?

We, the developing countries, assume our responsibility in fighting poverty, providing better health and education to our people, reinforcing our democracies and consolidating our institutions. However, it is essential that international cooperation for development be continued, since this will result in a more just, stable and peaceful world.

There is no doubt that in recent years the world has changed dramatically. We have moved from an international society where political and military confrontation weighed heavily on relations to a system where cooperation and dialogue among the great Powers have gradually eased the fear of a nuclear holocaust. In this new environment of international relations, in which economic questions have become global in nature, the United Nations must also modify some of its previous patterns of conduct and management.

What do we want from the United Nations in the twenty-first century? The Secretary-General has submitted a comprehensive programme for the reform of the United Nations system, a programme that must be profoundly and carefully analysed by all Member States, and Ecuador will actively participate in the debate on this subject.

It must be pointed out that this world body must confront the great challenges to mankind, such as the promotion of economic and social development along with the needed preservation of the environment; the maintenance of international peace and harmony; the achievement of total and complete disarmament; the promotion of human rights; and the strengthening of cooperation among all nations to eradicate poverty.

Since its establishment, the United Nations has fulfilled a number of the purposes for which it was created. It is true that the Organization, for various reasons largely attributable to Member States themselves, has not fulfilled some of the high expectations of the international community. It is worth noting that one of the most accurate phrases ever uttered in this forum recognizes that the United Nations is exactly what its Members want it to be. The successes and failures of the Organization are the successes and failures of the States that make it up. I do not wish to start listing past errors, but we should not forget them, because they can serve as useful lessons. We must above all be aware that today there are new challenges, and that we must look ahead and face them.

We must design an Organization which, through practical mechanisms, leaves rhetoric aside and assumes a dynamic role in the solution of world problems. This will require substantial reform of the working methods of the United Nations. Furthermore, it will require a new attitude by Member States in order to create a just and equitable international society based on the authentic, democratically expressed will of the international community.

For the Organization to respond more effectively to the challenges now facing the international community, these reforms should not be restricted to a single sector within the institutional structure. Let me mention the reform of one of the most important organs of the United Nations: the Security Council. Ecuador attaches particular importance to the reform of that body as part of the strengthening of the United Nations. We believe that the ultimate objective of these efforts must be to develop a more democratic, transparent and truly representative working system for the Council.

The reform of the Security Council must not be limited to a mere discussion of the number of members or of how many delegations should represent each region — although here we believe that the number of Security Council members must be increased in the light of the new world realities, to obtain a more significant presence of developing countries in accordance with equitable geographical distribution. We also believe that real reform of the Security Council should aim above all at ensuring that decision-making machinery and processes have the transparency, effectiveness and pluralism that must characterize every democratic institution. This includes, among other specific measures, the limitation of the veto power of the Council's permanent members, and timelier and more effective action to prevent international conflicts at the request of any State Member of the Organization.

As we approach the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law, I would like to reaffirm our hope that its objectives will be fully met, particularly those relating to the promotion of and respect for the principles of international law and to the broadest possible recourse to ways and means for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States. We know that complex international disputes cannot be settled solely by legal mechanisms, but it is no less true that any settlement must be based on legal instruments and must follow formal procedures.

An essential element of Ecuador's international policy is the search for a just and permanent solution to the Ecuador-Peru territorial issue. With the valuable help of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States as guarantor countries, talks between Ecuador and Peru are currently under way in Brasilia on the remaining impasses that affect our common border, in accordance with the commitment of both countries to find a peaceful and final solution to these issues. Ecuador will continue to participate in these talks, motivated by a true spirit of peace, because we desire a global, final, honourable and realistic solution that reflects the legitimate expectations of our people, which, together with the other peoples of the Americas, are seeking to create a future of mutual benefit and constructive and peaceful cooperation. The efforts of the Ecuadorian and Peruvian peoples are aimed at finding a definitive solution to this dispute.

International interest in the progress of the Brasilia talks and the immense prospects that would open for both countries in the new millennium are factors that should encourage our Governments to make all efforts necessary to settle this age-old historical controversy, and thus respond to the just aspirations to peace and development that we all share. Our country longs for peace and wants peace; it does not want war. We are convinced that there is no victory in a war, only different degrees of defeat owing to the incalculable consequences that can affect the political, moral, social and economic life of our countries.

The Charter of the United Nations states that world security is not limited to the significant issue of the prevention and settlement of violent conflicts. A safer world is also a world where general prosperity

eliminates the causes of most conflict and human suffering. The United Nations should continue to be a forum for the discussion of critical issues concerning the search for the economic development of more than three quarters of the world's population.

To be sure, Ecuador is aware that economic growth per se is not enough to generate adequate social justice and an equitable distribution of income. My Government has designed programmes and plans aimed at covering the needs of the marginal populations of Ecuador. With the assistance of the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, we have established a national social development plan that includes government action in line with the commitments assumed by the international community during the World Summit for Social Development.

The socially oriented philosophy of my Government leads me to join those who suggest that the eradication of poverty throughout the world should be the main goal of the international community's coordinated efforts in the coming years. The globalization of the economy cannot be limited to the use of cheap labour in the developing world, the proliferation of profitable investments and the exploitation of certain markets. It should also aim at providing coordinated and systematic assistance to immense populations whose only experience of globalization has been their eternal poverty and frustration.

Since time immemorial, the inhabitants of Ecuador have had special devotion to nature. My country, which has one the greatest biodiversity reserves in the world, has a deep sense of respect for nature and an awareness of its value, which are deeply rooted in our traditional culture. Ecuadorian indigenous communities, for example, possess ancestral knowledge concerning the rational management of resources and the preservation of the ecosystem.

Ecuador is aware of the difficult dilemma faced by every society when it comes to choosing between economic progress and the preservation of the environment. Given the basic value that the natural environment has for the Ecuadorian people, we have dedicated all our efforts to preventing, or at least limiting to the greatest extent possible, the degree of destruction of nature caused by economic progress.

As it did during the special session of the General Assembly held last June, my Government would like to reiterate its strong commitment to the implementation of Agenda 21 and to reaching the Agenda's goals of sustainable development. The efforts of developing nations will be successful only if they can secure the effective support of developed countries through compliance with the commitments assumed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Rio summit. There can be no universal environmental preservation without a genuine change in the unsustainable consumption patterns that bring about the increasing deterioration of the global environment, without adequate financial assistance for development in percentages proportional to gross domestic product, and without adequate facilities to access modern technologies.

The establishment of new trade and financial regimes and the urgent need to restructure our economies give rise to enormous challenges for developing countries. We believe that we should redouble our efforts in order to meet the requirements of globalization, in such a way that our nations can also benefit from the new international economic vigour.

Unlike developed countries, for developing countries the globalization process is not only a way to reactivate productive growth, maintain an upward trend in stock market indicators or increase business profits. For developing countries, the economic aspect of the so-called globalization should be an opportunity to accelerate the sustainable development of their peoples, particularly with regard to social issues.

It should be recalled that developing countries have made spectacular efforts to adjust to the new economic realities. Trade adjustment and liberalization programmes have had strong short-term impacts in significant sectors of our society. Several States have adopted severe economic measures, hoping that in the end they will have positive results for all. However, we cannot help but feel that this attitude contrasts with the behaviour of some industrialized countries.

In trade matters, for example, although some developed nations insist on the liberalization of trade, they persist in keeping various barriers against trade flows originating in the South. We are not opposed to the moderate liberalization of markets regulated by international trade in order to prevent negative effects on sensitive sectors of local economies, but we are opposed to those who preach freedom of trade for

some and then systematically avoid it for themselves as they see fit. Developing countries demand a fair, equitable and transparent environment for international trade that will allow us to reap the benefits of economic globalization.

On the other hand, many developed countries with influence in financial decision-taking circles maintain a purely economic perspective — as opposed to a wider social vision — of the financial difficulties affecting the developing world. They continue to associate a nation's economic health with the vigour of its macroeconomic indicators alone. In fact, no nation can have a healthy economy if a significant sector of its population lives in extreme poverty or if internal growth indicators do not guarantee a sustainable and continued development in the future. Foreign debt still weighs heavily on my country and prevents us from reaching the objectives of sustained economic and social development and environmental protection. With the same constructive spirit as that which guides our trade policies, we are convinced that the institutions of the international financial system should support developing countries' efforts to facilitate their economic advancement and fulfil the commitments of the Earth Summit.

International trade and finance, disarmament and security, environment and development are issues that cannot be considered separately from one another. We know that all the issues in the international agenda are interrelated and we address them separately just for convenience of consideration. In any case, we must never lose sight of the principle of globality and interrelation in the international agenda, or we may run the risk of having an utterly limited historical perspective and objectivity.

Accordingly, Ecuador shares the view of the United Nations Secretary-General on the importance of human rights in the modern world and that all relevant programmes implemented by the Organization must be fully integrated within the scope of activities of the United Nations.

In the case of Ecuador, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that one of the principles of my Administration is to enforce a policy of absolute respect for human rights. I have the ethical conviction that modern civilized life is impossible without individual guarantees and tolerance for diverging opinions. The Ecuadorian State is committed to following this line of conduct and to promoting and protecting all human, civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, including the right to development. We are also committed to encouraging inquiry procedures in cases of violations of such rights and to punishing those found liable for them.

The battle against corruption is one of the essential objectives of the National Government in order to ensure that government institutions can recover their respectability and the trust which our people is entitled to place in them.

I wish to refer to a specific aspect related to the human rights issue: the establishment of an international criminal court to punish the most serious crimes, such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Ecuador strongly supports this initiative. We share the view that this court should be established by international convention. We therefore urge all States to show the necessary political will to overcome the remaining technical difficulties in order to convene the conference of plenipotentiaries charged with approving the court's statutes.

To conclude, as President of the Republic of Ecuador, I have the pleasure to bring the message of friendship and brotherhood of the Ecuadorian people to this forum, in which all the nations of the world are represented. Our people has consolidated its democracy and balanced its economy and is moving boldly forward to build its future. It is a people that sincerely aspires to ensuring that international mechanisms understand the realities of developing countries. Above all, at this moment in our history, in the face of any potential natural disaster, such as the El Niño phenomenon, we would like to count on the timely, effective and direct cooperation of the United Nations and the various relevant international institutions. I wish to extend once again our message of friendship and fraternity, as well as my country's commitment to the lofty ideals that guide the efforts of the United Nations in the international sphere.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Excellency the President of the Republic of Ecuador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fabián Alarcón Rivera, President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Samper Pizano (*interpretation from Spanish*): As President of Colombia and Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, I would like to extend to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on your appointment to preside over this most important session, and I also wish to thank Ambassador Razali for his diligence in performing his duties during the fifty-first session of the Assembly.

Over the decades the United Nations has shown that its founders were not mistaken when they entrusted to it the mission of developing a new model of co-existence for our planet, thanks to which we defeated colonialism, fought against apartheid, prevented territorial confrontations, extended our hand to help children, defended the rights of women and protected the environment.

However, we find ourselves today at a crossroads similar to that which led us to sign the San Francisco Charter. The globalization of the world has brought about the internationalization of problems such as drug trafficking, terrorism and corruption, all of which seriously threaten our systems.

Certain industrialized nations are behaving selfishly in defining new rules of the game for free economies. Unilateralism and conditions imposed by the powerful upon others are rampant throughout the world. The spare capacity of the military industrial complex since the cold war is encouraging the beginning of a dangerous arms race. The open wound of foreign debt is still an obstacle to the development of many of the poorest countries. The violation of human, political, social and economic rights is also the order of the day.

The new United Nations, which the Secretary-General has proposed we should reflect upon as the century comes to an end, will surely not deal only with armed conflicts. We must be prepared to face other kinds of war: social war against poverty; judicial war against organized crime; political war against interventionism in our sovereign economies; and moral war against the violation of human rights.

We cannot yet assert that the process of globalization really represents progress for all of humankind. While globalization has generated great economic and technological advances, such progress continues to be the privilege of the industrialized nations and very small segments of the population of the rest of the world. True progress for humanity cannot be brought by phenomena which generate new and more profound imbalances in the quality of life for individuals. We must work hard to ensure that States and multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, direct their efforts to guaranteeing that the benefits of globalization do not remain in the hands of a few.

Therefore, any reform of the United Nations must begin with the return of the concept of solidarity which inspired the San Francisco agreements, and which is the very *raison d'etre* of our Movement. We want not more summits, but more compliance with the summits not yet complied with; a summit on compliance with other summits would be welcome.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is not being properly complied with. Important members have yet to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention. There seems to be no interest in making progress on fundamental agreements to restrict the conventional arms markets run by the world's merchants of war. Government aid, as a proportion of the resources transferred to developing countries by developed nations, has dropped from 42 per cent to 24 per cent in recent years. Funds for military operations within the United Nations system have increased 17 times compared with increases in funds for social programmes.

We must find new paths for the United Nations to follow. The reform of the United Nations system proposed by the Secretary-General must encompass all spheres of the United Nations system as a whole.

In the first place, there is the economic sphere. The Bretton Woods organizations — the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund — which were born as part of the agreement of March 1946, have progressively been removing themselves from the original direction exercised by this Assembly over their economic and social policies. They have ended up by configuring a development model which they impose on developing economies, without those economies being able to discuss their own priorities. Reform should include matters such as having greater international liquidity, greater flexibility in the management of multilateral debt, concessionary credit flows for social investment and coordination with economic bodies representing the interests of developing countries, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

The situation of the United Nations social sphere is the most worrisome. The greatest burden of the Organization's budgetary crisis has fallen upon the bodies involved, whose financing has dropped by many millions of dollars during the present decade. Some developed countries have inexplicably withdrawn from bodies devoted to children, culture, population, employment and the environment, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. The report of the Secretary-General contains interesting proposals to restore the activities of such bodies, which constitute the very heart of the United Nations.

In a world where 1.3 billion people still survive on less than a dollar a day, in a world where, for the price of one combat plane, 57,000 children in Africa can be fed for a year, it is impossible to conceive of a reform of the United Nations whose priority is not to strengthen the work of its institutions and programmes dedicated to social issues.

Finally, there is the matter of the political relationship between the Assembly and the Security Council. The proposed strengthening of the Security Council cannot be carried out at the expense of taking power away from this Assembly, the highest democratic body of the system. Any expansion of the Council must take into account that developing countries by their nature and as spokesmen for various regions of the world, need to have greater representation. The instrument of the veto should be abolished because it is anti-democratic, since it places in the hands of one country the power to ignore the will of the majority. If the veto cannot be eliminated, it should be restricted to those matters truly fundamental for world security, and the right to appeal vetoes before judicial or political bodies, such as this Assembly, should be established.

A few months ago the Secretary-General presented to the United Nations a very interesting proposal for the reform for the Organization. The Non-Aligned Movement, which I represent, is reviewing this initiative and considers that a number of its proposals would contribute to the revitalization of the United Nations.

We do not want a United Nations divided between rich and poor, with Members having first- and second-class status according to their economic contributions. The United Nations is not a private company, but the forum of solidarity in which all the countries of the world come together.

I wish to take this opportunity to appeal to the United Nations, and the international community at large, to confront the grave problem of arms proliferation with a clear and well-defined strategy that will lead us to concrete results. To that end, I wish to propose five points for effectively dealing with of this matter.

First, I propose the declaration by the developing countries of a two-year, worldwide moratorium on the high-technology-weapons trade.

Secondly, I propose the expansion of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms to include light weapons, as well as production and storage, with a view to strengthening its role as a means of promoting confidence.

Thirdly, I propose that the Governments of arms-producing countries commit themselves to the establishment of a moratorium on the sale of high-technology weapons in regions in conflict, as well as to converting their weapons-production industrial capacity and workforce to other economic sectors.

Fourthly, I propose the follow-up and verification of all multilateral commitments and existing treaties in this area.

Fifthly, I propose that the regulation of trade in light arms, as well as in high-technology weaponry, should be a subject of deliberations at the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

This initiative is designed to deal with the various facets of the grave phenomenon of arms proliferation, which — besides draining vast resources that could be devoted to the social and economic development of our peoples — constitutes the most dangerous threat to the peace and security of the world.

Much water has flowed under the bridge that we built in San Francisco half a century ago to make the world a better place to live.

We have, without any doubt, progressed, but we cannot claim to be satisfied despite what we have achieved. So long as there is a sad, hungry child in the world, there will be a United Nations. So long as there is a weapon raised to kill a neighbour, there will be a United Nations. So long as entire populations are displaced from their homes by violence, hunger and intolerance, there will be a United Nations. So long as thousands of young people do not have access to education because they must struggle every day to survive, there will be a United Nations. So long as the whims of the powerful continue to defy the aspirations of the powerless, there will be a United Nations. So long as drugs on the streets threaten the future of our children, there will be a United Nations. So long as terrorists and violators of human rights continue to run loose, there will be a United Nations. So long as there is a need for solidarity, love and joy in the world, there will be a United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now call on the Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, His Excellency Mr. Wolfgang Schüssel.

Mr. Schüssel (Austria): Let me express my pleasure at seeing you, Sir, the Foreign Minister of Ukraine — with which Austria has close historical links and enjoys excellent relations — presiding over the General Assembly. We are confident that your profound professional experience in the United Nations system and your negotiating skills will ensure substantial progress in our ambitious agenda.

On behalf of the Federal Government of Austria, I should also like to express our sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose wise leadership of the Organization we fully support. In the short time since he took office he has succeeded in reaching out not only to Governments but also to the people and the media, thus fostering a new awareness about the goals, aspirations and achievements of the United Nations as the indispensable instrument of global cooperation.

My colleague from Luxembourg has already expressed the position of the European Union, which we fully endorse. I should like to elaborate on a few points to which Austria attaches particular importance.

The United Nations is currently preparing itself for the challenges of the twenty-first century. The Secretary-General and his team, with the encouragement of Member States, have initiated comprehensive reform. Austria welcomes this major effort to redirect the Organization towards the needs of the future, and we fully endorse the Secretary-General's proposals. In particular I should like to emphasize the following points: first, the streamlining of leadership and management structure; secondly, the consolidation of the United Nations presence in the field; thirdly, the return of development to the centre of United Nations activities and the better combining of the potential of United Nations funds and programmes; and, fourthly, the strengthening of human rights in all aspects of the work of the United Nations.

Without adequate resources, however, the United Nations will not succeed in carrying out its tasks. As long as Member States do not fully honour their obligations, the financial situation of the Organization will remain critical. Settling the arrears is therefore an imperative. Austria is proud of its traditional record of paying its contributions to the United Nations in full and on time. The serious political will and sincere commitment of every Government will be required. Needless to say, unilateral decisions are unacceptable in the framework of multilateral cooperation.

The fight against drugs, crime and terrorism has rightly become a first priority for the international community. Nearly 1 per cent of the world's population above the age of 15 today has abused stimulants. An estimated 300 tons of heroin a year have been produced during this decade to supply about 8 million addicts. While I hope that regional cooperation will soon contribute effectively to the fight against illegal trafficking and drug abuse, the Secretary-General's intention to strengthen the United Nations capacities in this field deserves the support of all Member States.

Austria will cooperate closely with the newly appointed Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, Mr. Pino Arlacchi. We are convinced that his profound knowledge and experience in fighting organized crime will be a strong asset in pooling the resources of the United Nations system, the Member States and relevant institutions. To demonstrate its support, Austria will make a significant financial contribution to the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Trust Fund.

Illegal migration is increasingly linked to transnational crime. The reckless exploitation of humans in distress is a particularly reprehensible form of international crime. An increasing number of people smuggled illegally across borders find themselves helpless victims deprived of all financial means and with an illegal status in a foreign country. The perpetrators, at the same time, earn the profits and escape justice by cynically making use of a loophole in the international criminal law regime. There is an urgent need for an international legal instrument making the smuggling of illegal migrants punishable as a transnational crime, thus ensuring that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

I have asked legal experts to prepare a draft international convention against the smuggling of illegal migrants. This draft is being circulated as an official document under the appropriate agenda item. We propose that the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice consider this draft as a matter of priority at its next session. I am confident that our initiative will help in closing a dangerous legal lacuna, thereby strengthening international judicial cooperation in this field.

Substance abuse and drug-related crimes continue to take a high toll in both the developing and the industrialized worlds. Human and social development is threatened on a global scale. Strengthening and updating existing international anti-drug capacities will require innovation and new methods. In this respect, the special session of the General Assembly devoted to international drug control, which is to be held in June 1998, will provide us with an excellent opportunity to renew our political commitment by closing our ranks against illegal drug trafficking and striving jointly for progress in preventive efforts.

Anti-personnel landmines constitute a particularly malicious threat to the security of individuals and countries. Even decades after the end of a conflict, such as the Second World War, these hidden killers take a terrible toll among civilian populations, killing or maiming more than 20,000 people each and every year. Every year 20 times more mines are laid than cleared. Estimates speak of 110 million mines laid in more than 60 countries. I think that this spiral of death must be stopped.

Austria was one of the first countries to ban anti-personnel landmines at the national level. We strongly advocated a total ban, and we prepared the draft for such a convention. Non-governmental organizations have played a prominent role in creating the necessary momentum, and I would like to thank them respectfully for that on behalf of the Austrian Government. The Oslo Diplomatic Conference negotiated a treaty on this basis, and I look forward to signing the Convention in Ottawa, together with so many of my colleagues who share this goal. I urge the countries that were not able to join the consensus in Oslo to become part of the process as soon as possible.

Ted Turner has generously earmarked a part of his unprecedented $1 billion donation to support intensified demining efforts. I wish to thank him for this unique gesture.

The dignity and worth of the human person are universal. Consequently, it is the duty of our universal Organization to help implement governmental commitments in this field. Since the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, human rights have moved into the centre of United Nations programmes and activities. Austria welcomes this trend. There is an intrinsic relationship between respect for human rights, democracy and sustainable development. Guaranteeing human rights is an essential precondition for lasting security and stability. This link has been highlighted by the Secretary-General in his commendable report on the work of the Organization.

I take this opportunity to warmly welcome the appointment of President Mary Robinson as High Commissioner for Human Rights and to pledge Austria's full support for her work. Her outstanding personality will undoubtedly contribute to further strengthening the United Nations role in human rights.

The review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights make 1998 the year of human rights. This will provide us with a unique opportunity to shape the international human rights programme for the new millennium. Its central objective must remain that international human rights standards be respected at the level of each nation. For this, the role of Governments is crucial; so is that of civil society. The international community, therefore, not only has to ensure compliance with these commitments and provide the necessary assistance, but it must also promote the role of civil society. We see this year of human rights as an occasion for reaching out to human rights defenders in all corners of the world. As host country of the World Conference and as the country assuming the presidency of the European Union in the second half of 1998, Austria offers its cooperation to ensure a successful human rights year 1998 in all parts of the world.

Austria places great emphasis on the promotion and protection of minorities. We do so on the basis of our historical experience and owing to our conviction that ethnic minorities do not threaten but rather enrich our societies. In this context, I am pleased to refer to the successful solution of an important minority issue. The Austrian minority in South Tyrol today enjoys a well-balanced autonomy on the basis of the Paris Treaty of 1946 between Austria and Italy. This autonomy has generated considerable interest in other parts of the world.

With regard to the human rights year, the implementation of the Beijing Platform continues to be a priority. In particular, Austria supports efforts to strengthen the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We also are contributing to the enhanced practical implementation of other international human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular with regard to juvenile justice.

Employment, as a matter of growing global concern, rightly ranks high on the political agenda. Governments are urged to develop further instruments to fight unemployment through the effective monitoring of labour policies. The World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen provided a set of principles and goals in this respect. In order to confirm these commitments and to identify good practices, I should like to recall that Austria, as a follow-up to Copenhagen, will host an international expert meeting on employment in early February 1998.

In our joint efforts to promote sustainable development, the peaceful use of outer space for the benefit of all countries has become an issue of rapidly growing importance to the United Nations in the last few years. I should like to reaffirm the full support of my country for the United Nations aim to expand activities in this field. We welcome the holding of the third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, which will be convened as a special session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, open to all Member States, in Vienna in July 1999.

My country is deeply committed to the peace process in the former Yugoslavia, in particular in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Dayton accords provide the framework for the return of Bosnia to normalcy and stability, for its economic recovery and for reconciliation among its ethnic groups. Full and comprehensive implementation of the Dayton Agreement is therefore imperative. This includes bringing to justice all indicted war criminals, wherever they may be. If we want to safeguard the Dayton process, the international community must remain firmly committed to taking the necessary political, economic and military measures even beyond July 1998. International support must remain conditional on full compliance with all international obligations. I should like to pay a special tribute to the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern

Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, which has made an invaluable contribution to fostering peace in that region.

Austria is in favour of integrating the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia fully into the United Nations family as soon as the necessary preconditions, including the application for membership, are fulfilled. In this respect, I stress our expectation that Belgrade will grant a large degree of autonomy to Kosovo and the Albanian minority.

Austria has followed the situation in the Middle East with great concern. We regret the fact that the peace process has come to a near-standstill. The confidence built up by the Oslo process has been largely destroyed. Our main task must be to re-establish and to strengthen this confidence step by step and to bring the parties back to the negotiating table. The present situation increases the risk of extremist activity. A precondition for progress in the peace process will certainly be respect by all parties for the agreements concluded and the engagements undertaken.

Austria is seriously preoccupied by the precarious economic and social situation in the Palestinian territories, where the unemployment rate is 70 per cent. It is of paramount importance to create the necessary economic conditions as a basis for political stability. There will be no lasting peace without a credible response to the economic needs of the people in the region.

Since 1960, Austria has participated very actively in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Considering the growing importance in contemporary peacekeeping of regional arrangements under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, my country has started to cooperate closely with those States and organizations that have taken leading roles in this field. In 1997 Austria provided about 1,200 troops, military observers and civilian police to 11 different peacekeeping operations throughout the world, including the Stabilization Force (SFOR) and the operation in Albania.

Austria actively supports the standby arrangement system, created in 1994, and in this connection took part in establishing the United Nations Stand-by Forces High-Readiness Brigade in December 1996, which was created to build a capacity for quick preventive action and crisis response.

I am deeply convinced that, especially in times of scarce financial resources, the international community should make a greater investment in the field of conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy. The United Nations has the mandate to take a leading role in further developing instruments for preventive diplomacy.

Austria is, and will continue to be, a loyal Member and a strong supporter of the world Organization. The United Nations — our Organization — is the only global instrument that can provide the necessary response to existing global challenges: eradicating poverty; protecting our planet's environment; combating drugs, organized crime and terrorism; and promoting human rights, including the rights of children. To this end we have to strengthen the United Nations.

Address by Mr. Abdellatif Filali, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Mr. Abdellatif Filali, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, His Excellency Mr. Abdellatif Filali, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Filali (Morocco) (*interpretation from Arabic*): First of all, let me say how very pleased I am to congratulate you sincerely, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco, on your election to preside over the fifty-second session of the General Assembly — an election that is a token of consideration for your political experience and great competence.

It is also a pleasure for me to salute you, Sir, as the representative of the friendly country of Ukraine, which has solid ties of friendship and full cooperation with the Kingdom of Morocco. I am convinced that your vast experience and excellent command of

international affairs will guarantee the success of our debates and will lead our session to results that open up new prospects of peace, cooperation and prosperity.

Mr. Campbell (Ireland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I should like to take this opportunity to express to the outgoing President, Mr. Razali Ismail, the representative of the friendly country of Malaysia, our respect and gratitude for his efforts and for having successfully guided the work of our previous session.

I should also like to extend to the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, my most sincere congratulations on the confidence placed in him by virtue of his election as Secretary-General, which crowns many years of competent management and tireless effort within the context of the United Nations. His election also reaffirms the deep consideration in which the friendly country of Ghana is held.

Since our last session, the world has been experiencing a period of various political and economic interaction which, unfortunately, has not lived up to mankind's aspirations for bringing the international community closer to tranquillity, security and peace. International relations indeed continue to be fraught with various tensions and disturbances. Thus, on the international scene, new conflicts have emerged which threaten the security, stability and sovereignty of peoples.

Given these challenges, we believe that those problems which emerge in the international arena today can be resolved only through international efforts under the auspices of the United Nations. In this context, we applaud the efforts made by the Secretary-General to reform and restructure the United Nations and improve its working methods in accordance with the requirements of this age. In the same way, we reaffirm our support for all of these efforts aimed at strengthening our Organization and enhancing its effectiveness to allow it to carry out its mission in full, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter.

We firmly believe that the aims of any reform designed to restructure the Organization and rationalize its expenditures can be attained only if due account is taken of the interests of the developing countries and, above all, if reform provides for a solution to their economic and social problems as well as the provision of material and technical means required for these ends.

With regard to enlargement of the Security Council, we would like to stress the need for consensus and the achievement of balanced and equitable representation of all continents, in particular since the conditions in which United Nations bodies, including the Security Council, were established have now disappeared. The world is now witnessing profound and swift changes which force us to reconsider the composition and role of the Security Council to make it a genuinely effective instrument which is not subject to objectives and interests which contravene the Charter.

The international community welcomed with optimism the peace process which began in the Middle East on the basis of agreements reached between the parties concerned. However, the interruption of this peace process, as a result of the violation by the Government of Israel of all previous commitments and the contravention of all obligations and rules of international conduct now threaten to wipe out all previous efforts to strengthen the foundations for peace in the region.

The violation by the Government of Israel of its commitments was illustrated by its decision to resume its settlement policy and to alter the cultural characteristics and demographic composition of East Jerusalem. This decision is in violation of previous agreements with the Palestinian side. This unilateral and illegitimate decision is also a blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which forbids occupation authorities from effecting any changes in the territories under their control.

Israel, which is still persisting in its refusal to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), has once again brought about an escalation of tension in southern Lebanon, and is continuing to ignore the Syrian proposals to resume negotiations from the point at which they were broken off.

Our vision emanates from our conviction that peace in the region cannot endure or achieve its goals except through equitable treatment which guarantees the mutual interests of all parties and in the context of a region free from weapons of mass destruction.

Convinced as we are of the need to pursue peace efforts, and conduct this process in accordance with the legal framework laid down for it, we would like to stress the need to honour all the obligations stipulated in the agreements signed, and the adherence to credibility in dealings based on such agreements, which will lead to peace and security for all the peoples of the region, and allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and establish their independent State with Al-Quds as its capital.

In this framework, the international community should take the necessary measures to make Israel respect and implement Security Council resolutions.

The stability of the Middle East requires the establishment and consolidation of security in the Gulf region. We deplore the sufferings of the Iraqi people, who are living in extremely harsh conditions as a result of the economic embargo which has been imposed on them for many years now, and we reaffirm that the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995) on "oil for food" is a first step towards lifting the embargo imposed on the Iraqi people. We look forward to the day in the near future which will mark the end of that suffering and the return of Iraq to the exercise of its rights as a member of the Arab family of nations and an active and constructive member of the international community.

Morocco, as a part of the Arab Maghreb region, takes a special interest in the existing dispute between the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and certain western countries because of its negative impact on the regional situation and on the brotherly Libyan people.

Thus, we call for a favourable response to the initiatives undertaken by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the flexibility it has demonstrated, and the efforts exerted by the Arab Maghreb Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement with a view to lifting the sanctions imposed on Libya.

Morocco, which has closely followed the development of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and has contributed, along with other members of the international community, to the initiatives proposed by the chair of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and through participation of Moroccan military units in the Implementation Force and Stabilization Force, expresses its satisfaction at the progress made in the implementation of the military and civilian aspects of the Dayton Accord, and stresses the need to pursue efforts to ensure its full implementation with a view to establishing the legitimate rights of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to contribute to the reconstruction of the country through provision of the requisite means as agreed by the conferences of donor countries.

As an African nation, and given its age-old and varied relations with other African countries, and furthermore conscious of its obligations to Africa, Morocco expresses deep concern about the deterioration of the political, economic and social conditions in many parts of that continent.

Morocco follows with deep concern the persistence of instability in some parts of Africa, and reaffirms its determination to support and enhance the efforts of the international community to find appropriate and lasting solutions to crises.

On the other hand, the woeful economic situation in Africa is a source of concern for the international community. This situation is particularly reflected in the weak participation of the continent in world trade and in an increase in its debt burden. It is also reflected in a chronically inadequate infrastructure, a serious deterioration in social and health conditions, and, despite the stringent structural reforms introduced by African countries, by the paucity of foreign investment.

In this context, we welcome the initiative taken by Portugal to convene a European-African summit meeting to consider these conditions in the continent and to seek appropriate solutions. We consider that this initiative reflects the awareness of the European Union in respect of its responsibilities with regard to Africa. Morocco therefore proposes the convening of a ministerial meeting to prepare for that summit. Similarly, the Security Council's initiative calling for the convening of a special meeting at the foreign ministerial level to consider the situation in Africa attests to the degree of concern of the international community with regard to the gravity of that situation.

In its relations with all other African countries, Morocco has always adopted policies aimed at effective cooperation, taking into consideration the priorities and the basic needs of our partners.

As a consequence of the profound changes that affected the world economy after the Second World War, it has become current knowledge that the world is today characterized primarily by the globalization of the economy. However, the new challenge which faces the international community today lies in coping with economic and social development issues in all their dimensions, and doing so in harmony with our efforts to achieve peace and security.

The liberalization of world markets and the globalization and comprehensiveness of the world economy have led to a noticeable increase in the volume of trade and financial flows. However, this has not eased the marginalization of developing countries or reduced their debt burden.

Morocco, which has been following with interest the activities of the World Trade Organization (WTO), considers that liberalization of trade must be basically aimed at correcting existing discrepancies and at narrowing the gap between developed and developing countries.

We hope that the second WTO conference, due to take place in Geneva, will provide a new opportunity for the international community which leads to consolidating the bases and rules governing multilateral relations, and to taking decisions likely to reconcile the imperative for trade liberalization and the requirements of development, while responding to the aspirations of developing countries by allowing them, if necessary, to adopt protectionist trade measures.

With regard to the question of the Sahara, Morocco, which cooperated with Mr. James Baker as soon as he was appointed Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, hopes that the results achieved will allow for the implementation of the United Nations settlement plan. In this regard, Morocco, which took the initiative of proposing a referendum in 1981, stresses once more its readiness and desire to cooperate with the United Nations for the achievement of this objective.

The most important achievement of the international community in this century, to which we soon bid farewell, was the end of colonialism in almost all regions of the world. In the past few months, the world has witnessed the return of Hong Kong to its parent country, the People's Republic of China, and Macao will also be so returned in 1999. In the light of the example of Hong Kong and the plans for the future of Macao, logic now dictates the elimination of all remaining pockets of colonialism throughout the world.

Here I am referring in particular to the Moroccan cities of Sebta and Melilla and the islands adjacent to them, which remain under Spanish domination. Morocco has always believed in the virtues of dialogue as a civilized way of reaching a final settlement to the problem of Sebta and Melilla so as to enable Morocco to regain its sovereignty over those territories while guaranteeing Spain's interests. It was in this context that His Majesty King Hassan II took the initiative in calling for the setting up of a Moroccan-Spanish unit to consider a final solution to this question. This initiative implies a greater rapprochement between the two countries, whose impact would spread to wider and more comprehensive fields.

Humankind is still committed to the noble purposes laid down in the Charter of our Organization. It is therefore incumbent upon us to pursue efforts aiming at the furtherance of those purposes so that, together, in a spirit of confidence and renewed hope, we may bring about a better future for all of humankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdellatif Filali, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Clement Rohee, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Rohee (Guyana): For some time now the United Nations has been engaged in a process of reform and restructuring with the aim of improving its capacity to address the many challenges which the world now faces. It has been an arduous and time-consuming exercise which, if truth be told, has diverted us, to some degree, from our primary task of promoting global peace and development. Yet the exercise is a necessary one if we are in fact to enhance the Organization's efficiency and effectiveness and to

gear it for service to the international community in the coming years.

My delegation is confident that, under the able leadership of the President, we will be able to make progress in our endeavours. His wide diplomatic experience, together with his intimate knowledge of the Organization, will serve, I am sure, to orient and accelerate our efforts. We congratulate him on his unanimous election and vouchsafe to him our ready cooperation to make this fifty-second session of the General Assembly a significant turning point in the life of the Organization.

To the President's distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, we convey our deep and sincere appreciation for the determination and dynamism which he brought to bear on the work of the last session. To his great credit, he laboured tirelessly to find general agreement on the steps which must be taken to revitalize the United Nations. His exemplary leadership will no doubt inspire us to fulfil the task at hand without undue delay.

I also wish to acknowledge with appreciation the notable contribution which our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has made to the reform process since taking office. In keeping with the promise made to the Assembly, he has presented us with a set of interesting proposals for the reshaping of the Organization for service in the twenty-first century. This comprehensive and constructive document requires our serious consideration. I intend, therefore, in the time allocated to me, to make a few comments which I trust, despite their brief and preliminary nature, will provide an indication of our thinking at the present time on the ways and means by which the Organization can be reformed.

Let me first say that we share the vision which the Secretary-General has set forth for the future role of the United Nations. The Organization has proved its capacity for preventing major wars and forging international consensus on important aspects of international relations. It is now poised to explore the many possibilities of multilateralism. Increasingly, Member States, large and small, are seeing it in their interest to cooperate with the United Nations to maximize their ability to deal with several international concerns. There is increasing recourse to its machinery in order to deal with such issues as development, the environment, disease, drug trafficking and terrorism, to name just a few. Many of the special agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and others too numerous to mention, cater to the needs of the most vulnerable sections of our population — the aged, women, children and our indigenous peoples.

Built on the pillars of multilateralism, the United Nations offers Member States a unique forum in which they can come together for their common good. Its grand design, elaborated some 50 years ago, remains by and large a useful chart for promoting international comity. It is important, therefore, as we plan for a new era, that we hold fast to the founders' abiding vision lest we be dashed against the rocks of isolation and left to survive as best we can.

The effective translation of this vision into reality requires strong and dynamic leadership. History has shown that, much too often, our most worthwhile aspirations have been left unfulfilled because of inadequate political commitment and direction. States often see the world only through the prism of narrow self-interest and are blind to the virtues of concerted action. However, the challenges of our times, when no single nation, however rich and powerful, can hope to be entirely self-reliant, require the highest level of international cooperation. For it is only by unity of purpose that we, the United Nations, can hope to achieve the aspirations so loftily declared in the Charter.

We are pleased to note that the Secretary-General, as the Organization's chief administrative officer, has demonstrated vision and leadership in outlining his suggestions for reform. Of particular satisfaction to us is the fact that in setting his priorities for the Organization's future work he has accorded high importance to its development activities. At a time when financial support is weak, it is imperative that appropriate strategies be developed to eradicate world poverty and restore economic and social prosperity, particularly in small developing countries.

We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's intention to strengthen management capability within the Secretariat to provide for full coordination of effort and for forward planning. We recognize the need for economy, but hope that this will not be to the detriment of clear mandates of Member States and to the fundamental nature of the Organization. It would be a

grave pity if, in reducing costs, the United Nations were to be starved of substance.

We certainly approve of the idea initially propounded by the Government of Japan, and subsequently endorsed by the G-7 countries, calling for administrative savings to be channelled into development activities. This dividend, although presumably limited in quantity, may be significant enough to serve as a catalyst for financing the development account that the Secretary-General proposes. Like the rest of the world, we welcome the generous gift of the Chairman of Turner Communications, who had participated in the 1994 World Hearings on Development and has now seen fit to come out in support of this cause. One can only hope that such philanthropy will be emulated by others in the private sector.

The recently concluded Agenda for Development, together with the joint strategy for development of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), provides a basis for moving forward in the field of economic and social cooperation. Both documents accept the fact that while private investment flows have an important role to play in development, they are, because of their high selectivity and general unpredictability, insufficient to guarantee the development of small disadvantaged countries. For those countries — and here I include my own — development assistance, debt relief, capacity building and increased trade will remain crucial to our progress.

At the macroeconomic level, we will continue to look to the United Nations to play a more central role in the concertation of development policies. The Secretary-General has said,

> "The promotion of economic and social progress is one of the United Nations primary objectives, enshrined in the Charter." *(A/51/950, para. 68)*

It cannot, consequently, be marginalized in the development process. Instead, it must be its principal generator.

Accordingly, both its structure and operation must be such as to provide "a more integrated collaborative approach". *(ibid., para. 72)* Greater coordination of development activities, both at Headquarters and at the regional and local levels, is essential. As has been suggested, the creation of a new development group and a United Nations development-assistance framework could possibly provide the necessary focus and direction. We should be careful to ensure, however, that the strengths of individual actors and agencies are not lost in any merger.

We fully support the proposal for a closer and more cooperative relationship with the World Bank and other international financial institutions. Over time, those bodies, although connected with the United Nations, have moved away from their original mandates and developed quite independently of the Organization. It is time that those bodies concentrate on human development as distinct from the means of development. We should therefore seek to bring them into line with the main organs of the United Nations. To that end, we encourage the Secretary-General to take whatever steps are needed to achieve that harmonization of the development efforts. We will also have to consider at some stage how to strengthen the relationship of the World Trade Organization (WTO) with the United Nations.

At the same time, we must complement these efforts by giving to the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council the direct and overarching responsibility for leading the development enterprise. In the past, those organs have been sadly left behind in the development process. Although useful as forums for dialogue and consensus building, they have failed to engage the key players. We should therefore strive to transform them so that they can provide a stronger political impetus for development and ensure effective global macroeconomic management.

We hope that from this debate will come a clear indication of proposals and recommendations that are considered desirable and feasible. There will be some, of course, which, like the conversion of the Trusteeship Council into a forum for dealing with issues such as the global commons, will require further study. These proposals may be explored in informal working sessions of the Assembly and then taken up formally as a package for approval and subsequent implementation. With diligent cooperation on the part of all, there is no reason why such reforms cannot be agreed upon early in the new year.

Institutional tinkering alone, however, will not guarantee development. The most important dynamic remains the political will of States. The several

strategies that we have forged and the many declarations we have issued over the years remain largely unfulfilled. It is no wonder that poverty is today the single most important threat to global peace and security.

The reduction and eventual elimination of world poverty is an imperative which the United Nations cannot ignore. At the special mid-term review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in June of this year, we came close to agreeing to achieve this target by the year 2015. This year, at the Kyoto session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and later, at the mid-term review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, we will have other opportunities for the further promotion of sustainable development. We should not fail to take advantage of these in our continuing efforts to create a partnership for the benefit of all States.

For its part, my Government remains dedicated to this end. In demonstration of our seriousness of purpose, we have honoured the obligations that have been deemed necessary to national development. As suggested by the World Bank in its publication entitled *Partnership for Sustainable Growth*, we have sought to promote

> "global governance in all its aspects, including ensuring the rule of law, improving efficiency and accountability of the public sector and tackling corruption as essential elements of a framework within which economies can prosper."

We have created a truly democratic society in which development is a fundamental human right. The fruit of our policies has been a constant annual growth rate of over 6 per cent. Today, all sectors of our society, including private enterprise and peoples' organizations, are fully involved in the development process and are fired by the optimistic confidence that, as a nation, we will overcome the problems that currently beset us.

In a few weeks, our nation will conduct another democratic election, open again to the scrutiny of international observers. Out of this exercise will come a fresh popular determination to continue along the path leading to economic and social progress. To facilitate this pursuit, the Government has prepared a national development strategy based on a fully participatory economy. Involved in its preparation were experts from both the public and the private sectors, who have prepared a draft text for wider public consultation and approval. In our view, this provides a useful policy framework which, by establishing needs and priorities, can serve to mobilize assistance from the international community, including donor Governments and international development agencies.

However, as was clearly recognized by our late President, Mr. Cheddi Jagan, the hopes and aspirations of developing countries such as ours will not fully materialize over the long term until the international environment is made more congenial to our needs. Accordingly, he continuously advocated in his lifetime the creation of a new global human order premised on sustainable economic development, equity and social and ecological justice, and based on the creation of a separate global development fund for assistance to both the North and the South. This new North-South partnership must be fashioned in a search for more positive and innovative ways to cope with the vagaries of globalization and liberalization, which are marginalizing millions of people and even many nations.

Guyana has openly embraced the 20/20 initiative adopted at the World Summit for Social Development as a means of sparking international cooperation for development. In addition, we have called for agreement on some forms of international taxation, which, like national revenue at the country level, would provide the funding necessary to promote global development. Thus far, some developed countries have been reluctant to contemplate such innovative means of resource mobilization. But in circumstances of ever increasing international obligations and decreasing development assistance, where will the necessary financing come from? The answer to this question is key to the future of the United Nations, for unless the Organization is endowed with predictable and adequate resources, it will be incapable of satisfying the many requirements placed upon it by Member States.

In my delegation's view, the time has come to deal with this issue. The Economic and Social Council has broached the question in recent high-level discussions, but we are a long way from testing the feasibility of the many ideas that have been advanced to find new and additional ways of financing multilateralism. Initial studies done by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other development agencies have revealed that some of the mechanisms proposed are indeed feasible. Why, then,

are some States unwilling to entertain any meaningful discussion of their introduction? Is it that they are afraid of losing control of the United Nations? Or are they not serious about their proclaimed adherence to the concept of the interdependence of States?

Assuring the financial stability of this Organization must be seen as essential not only to development but to peace. Invariably, instability and conflict within and among States are due in great measure to economic and social instability leading to intense competition for limited resources. An investment in development must therefore be seen as an investment in preventive diplomacy and in the building of peace.

Admittedly, these are costly tasks, but there can be no doubt that the expenditure involved is much less than that resulting from conflict. The international community should therefore be prepared to adequately fund activities in this field to enhance the prospects of their success.

Apart from financial support, there is also a need for more competent supervision by the Security Council. No reform of the United Nations will be complete without reform of the Council, which is the organ primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. Unfortunately, despite the most intensive search, we are yet to find general agreement on the basis for restructuring that important body. We must persevere, however, in the fulfilment of our mandate to devise a more effective, open and representative Council fully capable of performing the functions assigned to it under the Charter.

Guyana, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, believes that this aim can best be served by an appropriate expansion in the non-permanent category. However, in a spirit of compromise, we are prepared to contemplate enlargement also in the permanent category, providing a balance can be found between developed- and developing-country representation and agreement reached on the limitation of the use of the veto and on the concept of periodic review. We are ready to continue our work in this direction until a solution is found.

Meanwhile, we are happy to see the progress being made towards the creation of an international criminal court, which will be able to deal effectively with several crimes against humanity.

Last, but by no means least, we wish to see in the campaign for peace more active interest and participation by this Assembly in the disarmament process, so that the weapons of war may be converted into tools of development. Although we have yet to see any significant peace dividend from the ending of the cold war, we believe that a reduction in arms expenditures on both nuclear and conventional weapons can only benefit the welfare of all peoples. The Assembly must therefore encourage the Committee on Disarmament to intensify its efforts in this field and must itself take whatever action it deems necessary to prompt the conversion from arms production to more peaceful pursuits. Disarmament is too important an issue to be left to the major military Powers. The international community as a whole must therefore exert continuing pressure on the process to achieve the desired results.

At the same time, we must intensify the Organization's role in bringing peace to those countries and regions of the world where conflict or the threat of conflict persists. Upheavals in the Great Lakes region of Africa and the tenuous situation in places such as Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina still defy resolution.

In the Middle East, the peace process seems to have atrophied. The Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict continue to hamper the progress of that entire area. In Cyprus, where tensions are restrained only by the continued presence of United Nations troops, the danger of violence is ever present. On the Korean Peninsula, peaceful reunification is still an elusive goal. The international community has no choice but to do whatever it can to help the parties involved in conflict everywhere to work peacefully towards an amicable settlement of their particular disputes.

The world wants peace and development. It also wants the United Nations to help in the achievement of these goals. Governments have a duty to heed these sentiments and to increase their support of the Organization.

The United Nations itself must in turn reach out to benefit from the valuable reservoir of goodwill which exists towards it among the peoples of the world. Public information is key to securing widespread support for its activities and to expanding its role in international affairs. We therefore urge that the dissemination capacity of the Department of Public Information be enhanced in developed countries, where

awareness of the Organization's potential is less than it should be.

As we approach the major milestone marking the start of the third millennium, we must have a clear vision of what we want the United Nations to be and of what we want it to do. Only with such clarity can we be sure that the reform process will result in a change for the better. It is therefore my delegation's hope that this general debate will engender a common sense of purpose among its Members and a willingness on their part to press forward in the revitalization of an Organization which is so necessary to both our survival and our development.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, His Excellency The Honourable Mr. Lloyd Axworthy.

Mr. Axworthy (Canada): May I first take this opportunity to congratulate my very good friend, the Foreign Minister of Ukraine, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session and to convey to him the best wishes of Canada for a successful and productive association in this session. I know from our long personal contacts that the course of this important debate is in the best possible hands.

Let me also take the opportunity to thank and congratulate Ambassador Razali for his tireless and effective leadership of the General Assembly at the fifty-first session.

I come to the Assembly today with a sense of urgency and an abiding faith and belief that we are now emerging, not only from the shadows of the cold war, but also from the uncertainties of its aftermath.

(*spoke in French*)

Around the world, we see countless examples of the basic principles and overall vision of the United Nations Charter being put into practice. The people of the world are laying the foundations of a new international system for the new millennium.

(*spoke in English*)

Of course, I recognize that no part of the world is without its burdens of conflict, grief and personal suffering. Nor are there any great signs of relief from the growing burden of global economic inequities. What has changed, however, is the new international willingness to face the issues, to mobilize political will and to launch reforms. There is a sense, not of helplessness, but of hope. The old realities of power have not disappeared, but alongside them have appeared new forces, new coalitions and new ways of doing business — and these forces are impatient. As we have seen, in fact, in recent days, one person's vision and generosity can make a difference and stand as an inspiration to us all.

This new spirit needs to be manifest and inspire the work of the United Nations. The Secretary-General has proposed a serious and far-sighted set of reforms. Canada strongly supports these proposals and accepts them as a package. They promise not simply greater efficiency, but, we hope, greater effectiveness. Based on our experiences in Canada, I can say with some authority that budget-cutting by itself is not the answer. There must be serious structural change to modernize existing institutions, both national and international, that were formed over 50 years ago.

To undertake these reforms, solutions must be based on agreement and cooperation. Solutions cannot be imposed by one country or one group, but rather must be inspired by a sense of openness and innovation. In other words, we must establish a new compact amongst United Nations Members to set this Organization on a sound financial footing. As Mr. Udovenko has said, we are at a watershed, a defining moment for the Organization that can either provide new momentum or stall our advance. The direction we take is ours collectively to decide and the outcome in all our hands. We must not waste this opportunity.

(*spoke in French*)

Another defining moment, I believe, took place just over a week ago in Oslo. Ninety nations, spurred on by the efforts of the non-governmental organizations, agreed on the text of a treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. The treaty will be signed this coming December, just 14 months after it was first conceived.

(*spoke in English*)

While visiting the treaty discussions in Oslo, I was forcibly struck by how what has become known as the Ottawa process demonstrates the changed character

of world affairs. Above all, it shows how the breakdown of the old bipolar world affords new opportunities for civil society, private individuals, to influence multilateral diplomacy. The focus of the Ottawa process is a weapon that slaughters countless civilians, a weapon that has lost much of its military utility, whatever some may say. This illustrates the growing feeling, coming from the grass roots of the world community, that the engines of war designed for the twentieth century have no place in the twenty-first.

I should say that this is not the only example of the new grass-roots activism which points to the emergence of a global commons as a powerful positive force of globalization. For example, Canadian women, appalled at the treatment of their sisters in Afghanistan, have started a letter-writing campaign. I will be delivering some 5,000 letters today to the Secretary-General, which call on him to take the lead in exposing the gross human rights violations of women in Afghanistan as unacceptable in the eyes of the world's citizens.

The effectiveness of these new forces can be clearly measured. Nations from every region of the world have pledged to sign on to a complete ban on the stockpiling, production, export and use of anti-personnel landmines. We hope to see more join our ranks between now and December. For those who are still on the sidelines, we ask them to think hard and deep on this issue. Their engagement is crucial. By joining us, already a majority of United Nations Member States, they can help rid the world of this most inhumane weapon.

(spoke in French)

Canada recently announced its intention to destroy its remaining stocks of anti-personnel mines before signature of the treaty. We will also shortly ratify the amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

(spoke in English)

This treaty constitutes a promise to future generations. But it does not resolve the equally grave problems posed by mines already in the ground, nor does it address the plight of those who have experienced directly their dreadful impact.

Following the signing of the treaty, the international community will have an obligation to develop policies for an enhanced and coordinated approach to humanitarian demining, and to victim assistance and rehabilitation.

This is, as much as anything else, a development issue. Heavily mined areas of the world cannot pursue economic development until they have been demined; and demining is a hopeless task if there is no treaty to prevent the laying of new mines.

At Ottawa in December, we will invite nations to engage in a second phase of the campaign: a broad mobilization of groups and countries to tackle the aftermath of the landmines crisis. It is a monumental task, to be met only through the combined action of all States. We invite all present to join us. The generosity of private citizens such as Ted Turner, or of the Auto Workers' Union of Canada, and the commitment of those like Princess Diana must be matched, indeed surpassed, by the Governments of this world.

It is important to ask what is behind this willingness to tackle these old problems in a new way? What has brought us to the intersection of high hopes and new strategies, and the real ability to effect change in the world, as exemplified by the landmines campaign? To my mind, these developments and, above all the recognition of the need to adopt new approaches, are in part a response to the changing face of war.

In the second half of the twentieth century, we have seen one type of conflict become prevalent. These are wars fought within, not between, States; wars that tend to be long and bitter; and wars, above all, in which civilians suffer the most and children and women are often deliberately targeted. These are wars in which, in the words of Saint-Exupéry "the firing line passes through the hearts of people".

As this type of war increasingly accounts for the great majority of all conflicts, the distinctions that once informed the work of international diplomacy — between military security concerns and humanitarian or civil concerns — break down. This blurring of the lines, along with heightened media presence, has strongly affected international opinion. Fewer and fewer people are willing to view war as an acceptable instrument of state policy.

In the light of these changes, the concept of human security, which I highlighted when I addressed the Assembly last year, takes on growing relevance. It

is based on the premise that it is not enough to spare people from the "scourge of war" narrowly defined. Ensuring true, sustainable human security means tackling other severe threats: the unmet needs of more than a billion people living in poverty; attacks on human rights of individuals and groups within society; transnational threats, such as crime and terrorism; and threats to health and livelihood through depletion or pollution of our resources.

The problems of these new global issues will not wait for long-term solutions. It is urgent that we take action to prevent or reduce the incidence of conflict, to restore societies in the aftermath of conflict and to increase human security around the world.

The priorities for action can, in my view, be grouped under three main headings: addressing issues which cut across traditional boundaries between areas of concern, such as we have in the landmines campaign; identifying and addressing the root causes of conflict; and improving our ability to respond to crises when we cannot prevent them.

Let me talk about that first priority. Landmines are not the only complex, cross-cutting problem to be addressed if we are to reduce the impact of conflict. All too often it is small arms, rather than the major weapons systems targeted by our disarmament efforts, that cause the greatest bloodshed. In the hands of terrorists, criminals, the irregular militia and armed bands typical of internal conflict, these are the true weapons of mass terror. As with landmines, their victims are all too often civilians.

We welcome the recent report of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and discussions within the United Nations Disarmament Commission on disarming combatants as a step towards more lasting peace. These should serve as the launching pad from which to develop practical measures, in consultation with regional bodies.

(spoke in French)

To tackle this problem, the first steps must be to combat illicit trafficking in firearms and to bring greater transparency to the legal exportation of small arms. The Organization of American States (OAS) is currently working towards an Inter-American convention on illicit trafficking in firearms. Canada hopes that the OAS negotiations will result in an effective convention and will also inspire other regional bodies to take action.

(spoke in English)

Ridding the world of anti-personnel landmines and banning or limiting other forms of weapons directly reduce the human suffering caused by conflict. The other side of the same coin is building and enhancing human security. By building peace, reducing unsustainable military expenditures, promoting equitable and sustainable development and encouraging stable, democratic societies which respect human rights, we not only limit human suffering, but we also address the root causes of conflict itself.

To do this requires solutions that are built from the inside, not imposed from the outside. Sustainable peace can be built only through the active cooperation and participation of Governments, peoples, and groups caught in the conflict itself.

At the same time, a parallel effort is required to reform the United Nations development funds and programmes. Canada strongly supports the Secretary-General's reform proposals in this area. We place priority on improving coordination within the United Nations system at the country level, including among the specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, in order to maximize development impact.

Canada, through diplomacy and development assistance, has supported peace-building activities in certain regions for many years. To give further impetus to this approach, last October I announced the Canadian peace-building initiative. Its aim is to coordinate Canadian programmes and policies in support of conflict prevention and resolution, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction. A peace-building mechanism or fund has provided a rapid response mechanism in areas of conflict.

Over the last six months, we have used this peace-building fund for the following purposes: to provide critical start-up funding for the historical clarification Commission in Guatemala; to assist the preparatory commission for the establishment of an international criminal court by underwriting the participation of delegates from developing countries; and to provide financial assistance for the work of the joint United Nations/Organization of African Unity (OAU) Special

Representative for the Great Lakes region of Africa, Mr. Mohamed Sahnoun.

In addition, Canada is prepared to contribute up to $500,000 from this fund for the establishment in Bosnia and Herzegovina of a non-governmental organization foundation to develop civil society on the basis of multi-ethnic cooperation. I urge other members to join us in supporting this foundation.

Finally, I am pleased to announce a Canadian contribution of $500,000 from the peace-building fund to the new United Nations Trust Fund for Preventive Action, created by the Secretary-General in response to a proposal from the Norwegian Government.

A second promising area of work on the root causes of conflict lies in exploring the links between security and development, and particularly in reducing levels of military expenditures relative to economic and social spending. Last year Canada sponsored, together with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) a symposium on military expenditures in developing countries which brought together a wide range of experts who identified areas for further action: small-arms proliferation, about which I have just spoken, regional security, good governance and the rule of law.

The United Nations has established important tools to build the confidence necessary for reductions in military spending, in the form of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations standardized reports on national military expenditures. Much more work is needed, particularly at the regional level, to identify ways to reduce military spending and to redirect scarce national resources to the economic and social development goals.

A third area of attention is work on conflict that comes from threats to environmental sustainability. Environmental problems have the capacity to imperil living standards and to endanger the well-being of future generations. For these reasons, Canada strongly supports new agreements on hazardous chemicals, including persistent organic pollutants, and will work to ensure the success of the new intergovernmental forum on forests. Combating desertification also remains a priority for us, and we have offered to host the Desertification Convention secretariat.

The fourth and final promising area in addressing the root causes of conflict is human rights and good governance. Next year we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is an opportunity for all of us to reaffirm strongly the fundamental importance of this document and our commitment to the common standards it sets out.

In recognition of the importance of this anniversary, Canada will be sponsoring a broad programme of activities, including a major world conference on human rights and the Internet, to draw together work being done in many international forums, with a focus on strategies for using the new international telecommunications technology to increase respect for human rights. We are working on the development and publication of an annual report on the state of human rights worldwide, based on the findings of the United Nations independent human rights mechanisms. And we will hold a conference reviewing the impact of the 1993 Vienna Declaration, to be held by Canadian non-governmental organizations.

Abuse of human rights is sometimes excused as necessary in the interests of stability and national security, but the facts show otherwise. Countries with democratic governments which respect the fundamental rights of their citizens are less likely to wage war on one another. They are also more likely over time to achieve high levels of economic development.

(*spoke in French*)

Recognizing this, Canada has recently undertaken a series of new bilateral human rights initiatives. Our aim is to work with our counterparts in other countries to establish discussions between governments to foster exchanges between institutions devoted to the protection of human rights and civil-society initiatives and projects for the development of free media.

(*spoke in English*)

We also fully support the Secretary-General's proposals for reform measures to enhance United Nations work in human rights. And we welcome the appointment of Mary Robinson as High Commissioner for Human Rights, and offer her our support.

As we move towards the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the

challenges facing the international community, if anything, have increased. The trend towards targeting civilians in warfare has resulted in severe infringements of the basic rights of women and children. Too often we have seen children recruited as soldiers or women subjected to sexual assault as a deliberate weapon of terror.

Canada continues to make the rights of the child and of women, both in conflict and in peace, a top human rights priority, which we pursue actively in the United Nations and elsewhere. We welcome the appointment of Mr. Olara Otunnu as Special Representative to study the impact of armed conflict on children. We will shortly host a preparatory meeting for the main donor countries invited to the Oslo child labour conference. And domestically we have launched a Child Labour Challenge Fund to support the efforts of our private sector to address the problem of exploitative child labour.

Nowhere is the link between human rights and human security clearer than in the issue of children's rights. By protecting the basic rights of the world's children, we are nurturing a future generation of citizens with both the means and the desire to live in peace.

The final overall priority for action is crisis response. And despite our best efforts, there will be times when conflict looms, or when it cannot be prevented. These situations call for rapid, decisive action, whether to forestall conflict or contain it when it breaks out. These actions include not only peacekeeping and other military measures, but also humanitarian and judicial responses.

To date, the international community appears to have identified the lessons that the missions to Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Zaire have taught us, but not to have learned from them. In crisis situations, speed is the key to effective response. This is why Canada has been so active in efforts to develop a United Nations rapid-response and deployment capability, in particular a rapidly deployable mission headquarters here in New York. This would not only permit the timely insertion of military forces, but also integrate civilian and humanitarian organizations into mission planning and deployment.

Canada hopes to see measurable progress on the rapidly deployable headquarters and on the Danish-led Standby Forces High-Readiness Brigade initiative. These improvements to the United Nations rapid-response capability are complementary, feasible and should be implemented without delay. Let us learn our lesson, and not ignore it once again.

In addition to rapid military and humanitarian reaction, a key element of the United Nations response to conflict is the application of justice and the international rule of law. Canada strongly supports the timely establishment of an independent, effective international criminal court. In order to be effective, the court must have inherent jurisdiction over the core crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. In order to be independent, the court must not be precluded from dealing with matters on the Security Council agenda.

In conclusion, let me say that, as we all recognize, the United Nations was originally established as an instrument of international peace. Since that time, war has put on a new face. More and more, it has targeted primarily civilian populations. If the United Nations is to be effective — and I believe that the need for effective multilateralism has never been greater — the United Nations must adapt to this changing face of war.

At the same time, the United Nations must also recognize that it, too, has changed at its very foundation. Both its membership and its mandate have expanded, and the growing importance of United Nations development and humanitarian activities have made their mark. Clearly, it is time for concerted reflection on the purpose and functioning of this body that we have built together — including on the difficult issues of financing and reform of the Security Council.

The reform and expansion of the Security Council is a major undertaking of direct concern to all Member States. The long-term implications must be fully debated and carefully weighed, and the process must be fair and open. It must attract a broad consensus and cannot be rushed to accommodate other goals — including a short-term solution to the United Nations financial crisis. Canada wants to see a Security Council that is effective, transparent, broadly representative and, above all, less elitist and more democratic. The primary criteria for membership should be commitment to the ideals and undertakings of the United Nations and a willingness to remain always accountable to the full membership of this Assembly.

Broader United Nations reform must necessarily fail so long as Member States continue to demand more of a system to which they contribute less. Effective leadership and moral authority are rooted in respect for undertakings and obligations freely entered into by Member States. It is the responsibility of each and every Member to pay its dues. These obligations apply in full, on time and without conditions.

Looking ahead, there may be a time when we will choose to reconsider aspects of the current financial underpinnings of the United Nations. Indeed, we may collectively decide that in order to broaden responsibilities and share power in ways that better reflect current international realities, some adjustments to the scale of assessments are warranted. Such decisions, however, can be neither prejudged nor presumed, and would no doubt be influenced by the commitment of those advocating such changes to the broader purposes of this Organization.

The international context in which the United Nations functions has changed profoundly. Around the world, people are reshaping the way they live — be it by seeking more food, better air or greater democracy. Crucial to this massive transformation is the search for security, through both the reduction of conflict and the building of a better life in times of peace. The United Nations has long symbolized these dual hopes, for escape from "the scourge of war" and for "better standards of life in larger freedom".

I close my remarks today on a note of hope, quoting President Václav Havel of the Czech Republic, who said,

> "Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not a conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out."

Our hope lies in the certainty that the United Nations, as the standard-bearer of international values, of a sense of multilateralism and of a sense of cooperation and partnership, makes sense for all of us. This must spur us on in this Assembly for the challenges that lie ahead.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, His Excellency Mr. Ray Burke. I give him the floor.

Mr. Burke (Ireland): I would like to offer Foreign Minister Udovenko of Ukraine my warmest congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. His skill and experience will serve us well in directing the vital work to be undertaken at this session. Ireland, and you, Ambassador Campbell as Vice-President of the General Assembly, will spare no effort in assisting the President in the important tasks of his office.

I also wish to thank Ambassador Razali Ismail for the energy and commitment he devoted to guiding the Assembly at its last session.

My colleague Foreign Minister Poos of Luxembourg, speaking on behalf of the European Union, set out clearly in his speech to the Assembly the agenda for action by the United Nations and its Member States in facing the challenges of the world today. Ireland associates itself fully with his remarks.

This session is a crucial one for the United Nations. Decisions must be taken to make the United Nations more effective in meeting its real objectives and priorities in future years. The Secretary-General has presented us with a considered, balanced and substantial package of proposals for United Nations reform. This package marks a turning point in the reform and revitalization process. The Secretary-General has recognized that the future of the United Nations can be secured only by a clearer focus and better coordination of effort, expertise and resources on the key priorities — real peace and security, sustainable development, equitable economic and social progress, humanitarian action and, underlying all of these, the safeguarding of universal human rights.

Ireland welcomes in particular the proposals for a more concerted effort in the economic and social development sector. Together with our European Union partners, we have been developing our own contribution in this area. Our aim is a more effective and coherent United Nations effort which would finally make real inroads, particularly in the least developed countries, in the fight against poverty and underdevelopment. We welcome the intention of the Secretary-General to channel the resources saved in this exercise to development programmes of the Organization.

I know that some will feel that the proposals do not go far enough in one direction, and others in another. It is not possible to accommodate fully all

concerns. But there is enough in these proposals to make the start on reform that we have all been looking for. I therefore earnestly appeal to all Member States to join this broad consensus of support.

We should also, at this session, work to achieve a solution to the difficult questions of the financing of the United Nations and of the enlargement and working methods of the Security Council. Ireland, my country, has declared its candidacy for the Security Council in the year 2000. We shall do everything possible to earn support for our candidacy.

Living through times of dramatic change is rarely easy. Globalization and liberalization of the international economy have brought significant benefits to many countries and are changing the shape of our world. Some developing countries have benefited from these processes and made significant economic and social strides. Others, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, have become even more marginalized from the world economy, and this is unacceptable.

Ireland has been increasing its official-development-assistance budget over a number of years. My Government is committed to making steady progress towards achieving the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent in our development-cooperation assistance. Specifically, we are committed to having Irish aid reach 0.45 per cent of gross national product by 2002.

Some critics contend that development cooperation has not succeeded. The best response to this is to point to what it has already achieved. In regard to the most fundamental of all human rights, life expectancy around the world has increased by a third in the past three decades; infant mortality has been cut in half. These are not small achievements.

In our present globalized and increasingly interdependent world economy, we need to seek a new partnership between developed and developing countries to address those issues which affect the entire international community. In this the United Nations has an indispensable role to play, and we pledge our full support to assist the Secretary-General in his task.

In June 1998 the General Assembly will meet in special session to address the drugs issue, both at the national and international levels. I had the honour, as Minister of Justice and in the role of President of the Council of Ministers of the European Union, to address the General Assembly on this question in 1990. The Assembly has regularly considered further action to deal with this menace. But the action that has been taken so far has clearly been inadequate. We must redouble our efforts. Drugs are an international cancer which threaten the lives of the present and future generations, particularly our young. For all our people, they pose a real threat to the very fabric of society.

Last week saw the conclusion of negotiations in Oslo on a global Convention banning landmines, without reservation, without exception and for all time. This major step forward will be particularly welcomed by those countries which have suffered so much as a result of the use of these barbaric devices. Those countries not present there and not yet ready to sign in December must take account of the widespread international support for this agreement. We appeal to them to help ensure the maximum degree of adherence to the Convention. The international community must now work together with ever greater determination to provide for the clearing of mines already placed and for the care and rehabilitation, as well as the social and economic reintegration, of mine victims.

In 1961, when the then-Foreign Minister of Ireland, Mr. Frank Aiken, introduced a resolution at the sixteenth session of the General Assembly calling for the conclusion of an international agreement that would prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, he launched a process which the Irish Government firmly believed would eventually lead to total nuclear disarmament. Then as now, our conviction was that genuine international peace and security can never be achieved as long as nuclear weapons remain part of the armouries of States.

We welcome the achievements of recent years, whether bilateral or multilateral: the START Treaties, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the global ban outlawing chemical weapons and present efforts to strengthen the ban on biological and toxin weapons. These show that with the necessary will progress is possible.

Now is the time for serious consideration of an integrated approach, encompassing both bilateral and multilateral negotiations, culminating in an international agreement on a total ban on nuclear weapons. We must inject a real sense of urgency into translating the goal of the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons into a more concrete reality. My plea is for reflection on the

part of all; for compromise and for cooperation, and for a flexible rather than a dogmatic approach. I believe that we can offer no better vision, courage and leadership in the service of peace than to take up this challenge.

While we can look forward one day to a world free of nuclear weapons, no time should be lost in agreeing how the peaceful uses of nuclear energy can best be managed. We in Ireland live in close proximity to a nuclear-fuel reprocessing plant which poses a considerable threat to us because of the ever-present risk of a major accident at the plant. In many countries today, nuclear energy is viewed with alarm and apprehension. Public resistance has persuaded some Governments to renounce the nuclear option because the benefits of nuclear energy have failed to convince a sceptical and questioning public.

The impact of accidents involving nuclear-power reactors can cross international frontiers. The legitimate interests of States affected by such accidents demand that high priority be given to strengthening nuclear safety worldwide. Reactor safety and the closure of sub-standard reactors represent for my Government fundamental necessities that nuclear-energy States must meet.

It is simply unacceptable that poor management of radioactive waste and spent fuel should threaten the health and safety of populations or cause serious long-term damage to the environment of States which have no nuclear programmes. The recent Joint Convention dealing with these matters will hopefully bring about improvements. However, much more needs to be done through international cooperation to allay the deep misgivings of a concerned public.

Transport of nuclear materials and radioactive waste raises the most serious and justifiable fears. We must insist that this, along with all other nuclear activities, be carried out in strict accordance with the highest international standards of safety and security. Furthermore, the entirely legitimate sensitivities of transit countries affected by such movements must be recognized.

As we approach next year's celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we must recognize that we have fallen short in implementing the goals and aspirations of the Declaration. While recognizing that none of us has grounds for complacency in this regard, it is a reality that the human rights situation in certain countries remains of particular concern to the international community. The European Union, in its memorandum to the General Assembly, has listed the areas of particular concern to us, including the human rights situation in Myanmar, East Timor, Nigeria and Afghanistan, to name but a few.

We must all work together — Governments and non-governmental organizations and civil society generally — in dialogue and partnership to ensure that the human rights principles enshrined in the Charter and the Universal Declaration are respected to the full.

The current reforms proposed by the Secretary-General, in particular his decision to consolidate the two existing human rights offices into a single office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, are to be welcomed. They provide a clear opportunity to strengthen significantly the human rights programme of the United Nations by fully integrating human rights issues across the full range of United Nations activities. It is a cause of great pride to the Government and the people of Ireland that the Secretary-General has chosen Mrs. Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland, as the new High Commissioner.

I wish to turn now to an area of United Nations activity which is of particular concern and interest to my country — that of peacekeeping. Ireland has a proud record of service in almost every major United Nations peacekeeping operation. We will continue this role, including our contribution of personnel from the Irish police force — the Garda Siochána — to the new and important role for civilian police in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Our peacekeepers have at times paid a heavy price: some 75 Irish peacekeepers have died in the service of United Nations peacekeeping.

Our support for the role of the United Nations in its peacekeeping role has not wavered. But it is tempered by the sober recognition that, despite many significant successes in past decades, United Nations peacekeeping, particularly in recent times, has not always been effective. We must become better at averting conflicts, through more vigorous preventive diplomacy and action in dealing with the roots of conflict. When we are forced to intervene, our response must be prompt and better informed through effective early warning systems. Our tasks and

objectives must be better defined, both as regards keeping the peace and making the peace. The full support, political and material, of the Member States is essential if they are to be achieved effectively.

Too often the United Nations has been asked, to its cost, to keep the peace indefinitely in conflict areas, without any corresponding efforts by the parties to the conflict to make peace. All Member States of this Organization have a responsibility to ensure continuous and honest efforts to make the peace permanent.

The changing international situation of the last decade has seen the emergence of new sources of conflict and tension. Old ethnic rivalries and hatreds have resurfaced, leading to new local and regional conflicts. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the killing has stopped, but progress in building the peace has been painfully slow. In the Middle East, too, moving the peace process forward is proving enormously more difficult than could have been imagined. We call on all parties to live up to their responsibilities and put the process back on track. In Cyprus, in the Great Lakes region of Africa and in many other places, the serious efforts of the international community to secure lasting peace are making very slow headway.

In the island of Ireland, we face the task of forging reconciliation and, leaving behind us the bitterness of history, ensuring that the root causes of the threat to peace are addressed effectively.

Successive Irish Foreign Ministers have addressed this Assembly over the years and informed representatives of the efforts being made to resolve the conflict in Northern Ireland and bring about a lasting peaceful settlement. They have brought news of significant advances, from the launching of the intergovernmental approach by Ireland and Britain in 1980 and the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985, to the formulation of the Joint Declaration in 1993 and the publication of the Joint Framework document in 1995.

I now bring to the Assembly the joyous news that yesterday in Belfast we succeeded in launching substantial and historic all-party talks in which the future of a peaceful and agreed Ireland is to be mapped out. What is notable about all of these developments — each an important foundation stone in the current peace process — is that they were undertaken in partnership between the Irish and British Governments. Progress has been driven by our two Governments, united in the quest for peace and a lasting and just settlement. That progress has been defined and directed by the concept of the "totality of relationships", with which our two islands are intertwined and which bears directly on the question of Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland represents the interface between the respective traditions and future aspirations of both Ireland and Britain. Only in the totality of our relations can we come to terms with our differing visions of the past and reconcile our hopes for the future.

The notion of the "totality of relationships" has been reinforced recently by profound shifts in political and social attitudes in both Ireland and Britain. The character of these shifts has much in common in that they serve to illustrate the commonality that the peoples of Ireland and Britain share.

Ireland has been undergoing a dramatic and invigorating process of renewal. This has been most evident in our economic performance, but it is evident too in our social and cultural life. I have a deep sense that it has been encouraged and shaped by our involvement in the evolution of Europe and the development of our multilateral relations through the United Nations itself. This renewal has been marked by inspiration about what can be done and by what is needed pragmatically to achieve what we set out to do.

In Britain, there has been a dramatic development which redefines and reshapes the nature of its political union. And we too detect that same impulse to reinvigorate the institutions of the state, to undertake a reappraisal and a renewal as the new millennium approaches.

I believe that this sense of change in both islands, this quickening pace, will be a very important factor as both Governments and all the parties to the negotiations in Northern Ireland take the peace process forward. It will, I believe, impart an urgency and focus to the deliberations. More importantly, it means that those who form part of the talks process have the opportunity to shape their future rather than surrender through indifference or apathy to the inexorability of change.

For we live in a time which offers an invitation to shape our common future. That invitation is open to all those with the courage and vision to participate in the talks process, which seeks to reshape the relations which are central to the solution we seek — relations

between the two communities in Northern Ireland, relations between the North and the South of our island, and relations between Ireland and Britain.

The efforts of both Governments to construct the complex structures on which to base a peace process were undertaken with the very clear acknowledgment that ultimately it was there to serve all the parties most directly involved in the conflict and, through them, the wider community. As the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), John Hume, so clearly recognized, it had to be an inclusive peace process if it was to be a lasting one.

Creating the conditions for this inclusive process was a difficult task in the face of continued violence by paramilitaries on both sides — violence which has been ongoing for over 25 years; violence which threatened to limit the boundaries of a whole generation to suspicion, mutual mistrust and division; violence which still seeks to threaten and disrupt our efforts to build a lasting peace.

The task of creating an inclusive peace process required us to call on our friends in the international community. I want to acknowledge those friends, particularly in the European Union, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and, most important, in the United States.

The partnership between Ireland and Britain has been consistently encouraged and assisted by the United States under the leadership of President Clinton and with the backing of friends and supporters in the United States Congress. In particular, President Clinton offered his personal support and active engagement in the search for peace. The President undertook to share the risks for peace which were being taken by both Governments. And in doing so, he added significantly to the momentum which secured the ceasefire in 1994 and re-established it in July of this year.

The United States has been a resource offered generously in the name of peace. I want to acknowledge the invaluable role played by Senator George Mitchell in chairing the multi-party talks in Belfast. And I also want to express my Government's appreciation for the cooperation and assistance provided by the Governments of Finland and Canada, particularly by making available as co-chairmen of the talks former Prime Minister Harri Holkeri and General John de Chastelain. They have shown unfailing forbearance and unremitting commitment to this delicate and complex process.

With this help, and with the resolve of both Governments to ensure that an unequivocal ceasefire was a necessary condition for involvement in the talks process, another ceasefire was, as I said earlier, established in July this year. Because the ceasefire has been re-established, all parties to the problem of Northern Ireland have now been invited to join the talks process in Belfast and to begin the task of shaping our respective interwoven futures.

We have, in the course of the Anglo-Irish peace process, sought to accomplish the purpose for which this Assembly was established — to replace mistrust and violent confrontation with dialogue, negotiation and agreement between all the parties to conflict. We do not underestimate the difficulties that lie ahead. As the history of the United Nations itself has shown, major conflicts have, for the most part, been avoided. However, the resolution of localized conflicts has proven elusive and problematic.

The principles, purpose and practice of this Assembly and the United Nations itself were formed to replace conflict — of whatever scale — with peace through dialogue. In our approach to Northern Ireland, we have been guided by the same impulse to create principles, purposes and practices which will replace the method and means of sectarian hatred and intercommunal violence.

We have made it clear that in our talks, all issues are on the table, that no outcome is ruled out of bounds for discussion or is predetermined. We have constructed a process and rules of procedure by which the parties can discuss, refine and eventually agree on the structures which will embrace the totality of relations on the two islands and which command the consent of both unionists and nationalists in Ireland.

We have established as an integral part of the dialogue that we recognize the rights and wishes of the unionist community in the same way as we insist that parity of esteem for Nationalists is a necessary and just component of any eventual settlement.

We have set out our view that the resolution of the issue of the decommissioning of arms is an indispensable part of the process of negotiation. We have emphatically declared, in our insistence on adherence to the Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence, that only those committed to democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political

issues and those who renounce force or the threat of force to influence the outcome of the negotiations can be a party to the talks process.

We have embraced as a founding principle in the current talks process and its eventual outcome that any agreement must command sufficient consensus between both sets of participants. We have accepted that the agreement reached will be put to the people of Ireland, North and South, for their approval.

Both Governments have set a target to conclude these talks by next May and present proposals to the people of Ireland, North and South, in parallel referendums. I believe that this target is necessarily ambitious and realistically achievable.

We may well have setbacks in the interim. We certainly have difficult issues to confront and compromises to make which will require courage and vision.

But both Governments — and I believe the parties currently in the talks process — are collectively determined that this process will be pursued, that there will be no going back, and that the future we seek of harmonious relations and an honourable and comprehensive agreement will be secured and that lasting peace will be brought to our island.

The Acting President: I give the floor now to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, His Excellency Mr. Erik Derycke.

Mr. Derycke (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): At the outset, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate Minister Udovenko, our colleague from Ukraine, on his election as President of this session of the General Assembly and to express my most sincere thanks to Ambassador Razali of Malaysia for the invaluable work he helped us achieve during the fifty-first session of the Assembly.

It is clear that the way in which we organize ourselves as a world community is of the utmost importance for questions of war and peace, poverty and wealth, and justice and injustice in the world.

The United Nations Secretariat and the leadership of our Organization have a key role in this regard. All those serving United Nations institutions deserve our gratitude for the way in which they carry out their work, both here in New York and in the field, often in precarious situations in which some have even lost their lives.

But we should ask whether we, the Member States, have done enough to find common responses. Have we given the United Nations the necessary tools for comprehensive management? Have we not blamed the Organization for a lack of success in some of its endeavours, when they may have been doomed to failure anyway because there was not enough support from Member States?

We must be fully aware that, as Member States, we sometimes try to impose tasks upon the Organization which are beyond its capabilities, while we are all too often slow to provide help and support whenever and wherever it is really needed. More than once we have seen — in Africa, for example — that the United Nations has had to spread itself too thinly over vast distances and that adequate support for a United Nations role has not been forthcoming from Member States, which has weakened the United Nations ability to react when a dynamic response was needed in crisis situations.

Has not the time come, during this session, to ensure that the Organization can act with renewed vigour and reconfirm its authority? I am convinced that the answer to this question should be positive, and that we should, like the President of the European Union and other previous speakers, throw our full weight behind the Secretary-General's proposals to prepare the Organization more effectively for the coming millennium.

More efficiency and coordination, greater cohesion and better cooperation between Headquarters and agencies in the field are minimal changes, but fully justified. However, we need to do more because this year we must resolve the United Nations financial crisis.

It is unacceptable that Member States should not pay their dues in full and that they attach conditions to the payment of what they owe. All the speakers in the general debate should be able to proclaim from this rostrum not just that they want to improve the Organization's efficiency and that they support the Secretary-General in his efforts to that end, but also that their contributions have been paid in full,

unconditionally, thus proving their commitment to the goals of the United Nations and our common agenda.

The President returned to the Chair.

There can be no doubt that this agenda includes the achievements of the 12 United Nations conferences which, from the 1990 World Summit for Children to the 1996 World Food Summit, have paved the way for the current agenda in the area of international development. But responsibilities have often been distributed injudiciously and too widely, while mandates have proved insufficient. A more integrated approach in the social and economic sector has in any case become necessary. I therefore welcome the fact that the Secretary-General's proposals for reform pay particular attention to development, and I subscribe fully to his proposals.

Furthermore, a well-balanced expansion of the Security Council should be achieved without delay. Belgium, together with a number of like-minded countries that share the general concern with regard to strengthening the authority of the Security Council, has clearly stated its views here in New York. We advocate an increase in both permanent and non-permanent members, greater regional representativeness, enhanced Council efficiency and a limitation of the right of veto. The right of veto is incompatible with the general interest. It should be possible to modify the decision-making mechanism so as to avoid recourse to this instrument, which has become entirely obsolete. Belgium also pleads for more transparency and closer cooperation between the Security Council and countries contributing to peacekeeping operations.

Such organizational and financial reform can succeed only if it can rely upon a team of officials who see themselves as being at the service of the Organization and of the common good. Ultimately, an Organization reformed along these lines and better able to meet global challenges will have to strengthen its ties with and complement regional organizations, not only in the political field but also at the social and economic level. It will not be possible to make our world more humane without the joint effort of all international organizations in support of a global approach. In this effort, the United Nations, together with regional and specialized institutions, is a beacon of hope for millions of people. Strengthening the United Nations also means strengthening its ties with other organizations and associations so that they can keep pace with the overall reshaping of our Organization and of our world vision.

I should like to provide two examples. With regard to its policy on Africa, Belgium again stresses the need for an objective approach on the one hand and accountability on the other. The approach that we wish to promote is based on universal principles, the most important of which is that of human rights sustained by mutual respect based on equality. It is high time that we progressed to true mental decolonization. Efforts originating in the region itself should be given every chance to prosper and should be fully recognized by the international community. As for Central Africa in particular, our common efforts should give priority to the reconstruction and democratization of the Congo, in the interests not only of that country and its people, but of stability in the Great Lakes region as a whole.

On the other hand, in certain areas, such as Eastern Slavonia, United Nations "blue helmets" have succeeded in separating warring parties, protecting populations and preparing for reconstruction. It is therefore the responsibility first of the parties themselves and then of the international community to make every effort to prevent these achievements from slipping away. By extension, this is also true for the region as a whole. With regard to Eastern Slavonia in particular, it is important for the activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to be based on the accomplishments of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) and for such activities to be inspired by and based upon United Nations experience in the region.

I should now like to focus on another contemporary issue: disarmament. Needless to say, weapons of mass destruction should be forbidden. But this is also true for weapons whose sole purpose is to destroy human beings, such as anti-personnel landmines. In Angola, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Cambodia and elsewhere, these indiscriminate and cowardly weapons kill some 9,600 people and maim another 14,000 every year. They kill and mutilate more people than all the weapons of mass destruction put together.

It is high time that these devices were banned. In less than two years the objective of a total ban on anti-personnel landmines has met with a positive response in most parts of the world. Belgium, which was keen to play a leading role in this field, fully

supports this objective. As chairman of the international conference on a total ban on anti-personnel landmines, which took place in Brussels in June, I myself noted the existence of the political will necessary to achieve a ban by the end of 1997.

The recent conclusion in Oslo of the negotiations on a legally binding instrument means that most of us will be able to go to Ottawa in early December to sign this important treaty. My country made a great effort to ensure that we produced a strong legal instrument, with no exceptions or reservations, and we also advocated that assistance to landmine victims should be an essential part of this convention. Belgium is pleased to note that this international humanitarian standard will soon become a reality and invites all other States to join in the effort. It is also my firm hope that States will not wait for the treaty to come into force before they honour this total ban.

Humanitarian tragedies will continue to occur throughout the world. Whatever their origins, crises are become increasingly complicated. Still considerable in number, they create countless victims and immense human suffering. Despite greater solidarity and increased humanitarian assistance granted by a growing number of humanitarian and non-governmental organizations, difficulties on the ground have continued to grow in recent years. Above all, in addition to the problem of access to victims, the lack of security and total disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights require our particular attention. Indeed, I am especially worried about the recent increase in aggression against humanitarian personnel. These acts are often carried out with the sole purpose of blocking their access to populations who are suffering. It goes without saying that the authorities hosting the humanitarian workers bear primary responsibility for their safety.

These authorities must also ensure respect for humanitarian law, based on values for which a consensus exists within the international community but whose concrete application on the ground remains a daily challenge. This is another task for the United Nations. Existing legal instruments must be strengthened and expanded in order to extend the same maximum protection to humanitarian personnel in the field as is currently provided for military personnel in peacekeeping missions. In addition, the directives on humanitarian law such as those proposed by the International Committee of the Red Cross should also be revitalized and thoroughly examined.

Our Organization is increasingly confronted with crises that require global responses comprising not only their humanitarian dimensions, but also their military, economic, political and social dimensions. In these circumstances, humanitarian organizations must not only continue to ensure a thorough coordination of the assistance delivered, but also develop stepped-up convergence between, for instance, United Nations Blue Helmets involved in peacekeeping missions and humanitarian workers.

Greater interaction and cooperation between them is imperative if we wish to devise an integrated and suitable response to the ever more complex crisis situations facing the international community.

I believe that much remains to be done in order to improve and develop such cooperation: for example, joint planning for crisis situations, training, defining roles and mandates and, finally, implementation and follow-up of operations.

We must bear in mind that humanitarian assistance must never be used for mere political purposes, and it cannot by itself be intended to provide a lasting solution to a conflict. Humanitarian assistance should therefore never be a substitute for political, diplomatic and military action.

In this context, Belgium, in close cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, intends to organize next year, an international seminar precisely on the relationship between humanitarian, political and military actions. The focus will be on interaction between humanitarian, political and military actors in situations of crisis. This will be an opportunity to analyse closely the often widely varying approaches to this problem.

The objective of international humanitarian assistance is not only to guarantee the survival of victims of humanitarian tragedies. It should also help them be reintegrated into society. Viewed in this fashion, humanitarian assistance is an important factor in the protection of human dignity, human rights and humanitarian law. The international community must therefore put an end to the impunity of persons responsible for grave violations of international humanitarian law, whether committed against populations or humanitarian personnel.

The creation of the ad hoc tribunals for the prosecution and punishment of such violations and the necessary creation of a standing international criminal court, are important steps towards the fulfilment of these goals.

However, it is essential that these international judiciary bodies should be given a fair chance to carry out their functions. Thus, their legal competence should be firmly established and recognized by all Member States.

Respect for human rights has become an essential yardstick of the legitimacy of the exercise of State power and is increasingly considered a vital part of a country's international status and influence. It has become the new basis for the confidence we bestow on our fellow Member States.

Next year the General Assembly will devote part of its session to the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

That Declaration, without any doubt, is one of the most important texts of our times. It is the foundation of the whole array of standards that came after it and that have been incorporated into a number of international legal instruments. It is also the bedrock upon which rest all United Nations activities aimed at better respect for and promotion of human rights, in accordance with the Charter.

In the spirit of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, a growing number of Member States, in full exercise of their sovereignty, have accepted international commitments by ratifying those human rights instruments. However, I should like to express the hope that Member States will also spare no effort in having their provisions implemented. By so doing they will contribute to the universality of human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains an inexhaustible source of hope for all those who are deprived of their rights, especially the victims of social, political or economic exclusion or exploitation on the basis of their race, origin, religion, sex or any other grounds.

Consequently, I, fully subscribe to the Secretary-General's stated intention to integrate human rights horizontally throughout the full range of United Nations activities. Belgium reiterates to the Secretary-General its full support in this respect.

Let me conclude by saying that my country will make every effort — nationally, regionally and globally — so that the commemoration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be a resounding success that reflects the capital importance of the event.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Samadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): This morning unacceptable claims were made by the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates against the territorial integrity of my country, claims that have no basis in history or international law.My delegation has made its position in this regard very clear on previous occasions.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is fully committed to its international obligations, especially those arising from the agreement of 1961.

We firmly believe that misunderstandings over the interpretation or application of that agreement, if any, should be addressed with goodwill and through mutually agreed mechanisms in order to find a friendly solution.

My Government remains prepared to take up the misunderstandings over the island of Abu Musa directly with officials of the United Arab Emirates and stands ready to enter into negotiations without preconditions.

As the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterated in his statement before the Assembly three days ago, our message to our neighbours is one of friendship and fraternity, and we shall warmly welcome any initiative to strengthen the foundations of confidence and cooperation in the Persian Gulf.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Since this is the first time my delegation has spoken in the Assembly at this session, allow me to express our warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to preside over this session.

The Spanish delegation feels obliged to speak in exercise of its right of reply to refer to the mention of the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla in the statement made this afternoon by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco. Such mention is not in keeping with the facts, since those cities are Spanish territories whose citizens are represented in the Spanish Parliament with the same rights and the same status as the rest of their compatriots, and there is no possible parallel with other situations that are totally different in nature.

In addition, such references are not in keeping with the overall relationship that exists between the Kingdoms of Spain and Morocco, both bilaterally and within the broader region to which we both belong, as neighbours.

Mr. Otuyelu (Nigeria): My delegation would like to speak in exercise of its right of reply with reference to the statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ireland, in which he said that the human rights situation in Nigeria was an issue of great concern to his Group. We understand that the perception of the situation in Nigeria will be based on the cultural and historical background of the observer.

The situation in Nigeria is that at present all the local government areas — more than 700 — are under democratically elected officials. The operation of the National Human Rights Commission, which is independent of the Government, is living evidence of the commitment of the present Administration to the promotion and protection of human rights.

What Nigeria needs now is not expressions of concern about its capacity to pursue the programmes it has set for itself, but the understanding and the support of our friends; expressions of concern should not become primary.

We should like to state that the Administration is committed to democratization. The first phase has been completed, and the second and third phases are on course. The promotion of human rights is a priority of the present Administration.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My colleague the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran referred to the statement by the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates this morning on the question of the Iranian occupation of the three islands of the United Arab Emirates — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. I should advise my colleague that when taking up historical, legal and political issues with relation to those three islands he should examine the records of the Security Council since the beginning of that occupation in 1971.

That being said, however, I draw attention to the new trends towards a peaceful settlement of this issue on the basis of confidence-building and good-neighbourliness, and proceeding from our persistent concern to have friendly relations with the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran and the countries of the Gulf Corporation Council, especially since we believe that conflicts must not be resolved in the contexts of the use of force, but rather in accordance with the international norms enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the rules of international law. In view of all that, the statement by the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates contained nothing counter to international law or international legality. We are invoking our legitimate rights, yet as we speak here in this forum, friendly Iran is still occupying part of the territory of the United Arab Emirates.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.